

Indeed, the NCATF opened 28 arson investigations of incidents which occurred in October 1996, 24 arson investigations of incidents occurring in November 1996, and 11 investigations of arsons occurring in December 1996.

Arrests: As a result of the exceptional partnership among federal, state and local law enforcement, many of the incidents investigated have been solved, mainly by a combination of federal and state arrests and prosecutions. Since January 1995, arrests of 143 suspects have been made in connection with 107 fires at churches and other houses of worship. This rate of arrest (33%) is significantly higher than the general arrest rate for arsons, which is approximately 16%, according to Department of Justice statistics.

Since the formation of the Task Force, the number of arrests has increased significantly. One hundred and four persons, representing three quarters of all defendants arrested since January 1995, were arrested following the formation of the Task Force.

Of the 143 persons arrested, 24 are African American, 3 are Hispanic and 116 are white. Sixty-two are juveniles. Of the 54 suspects arrested for arsons at African American churches, 36 are white, 17 are African American and 1 is Hispanic. Of the 85 suspects arrested for arsons at non-African American houses of worship, 76 are white, 7 are African American, and 2 are Hispanic. Four additional white suspects have been arrested for arsons at both African American churches and non-African American churches.

Convictions: Since January 1, 1995, 48 defendants have been convicted in federal and state prosecutions in connection with fires at 43 houses of worship. All but two of the remaining cases are still pending trial.² A list of the incidents in which a conviction has been obtained is attached as Appendix 1.³ These successes include the first convictions under the 1996 Church Arson Prevention Act, 18 U.S.C. 247, as amended. Prosecutions in connection with 31 of the 43 incidents have occurred during the seven months since the formation of the Task Force.

Federal charges are pending in a number of cases, and grand jury investigations are ongoing in many others. Conspiracy charges have been filed, and convictions obtained, in a

² There have been two acquittals. On November 21, 1996, a defendant was acquitted by reason of insanity for the June 10, 1996, arson at Our Most Sorrowful Saver Catholic Church in Soap Lake, Washington, and the June 14, 1996, arson at the Community Evangelical Church in Soap Lake, Washington. He was indefinitely committed to the Eastern State Hospital. In October 1996, a 13-year old defendant was acquitted of state arson charges stemming from a fire that caused \$50 in damage to the Slaughterneck United Methodist Church in Milford, Delaware. The fire appeared to have been caused when a pile of leaves was set on fire behind the church. All of the other prosecutions have resulted in convictions or are still pending.

³ The list in Appendix 1 also includes convictions in connection with three incidents of vandalism and a conviction in connection with one arson that occurred in 1994, but where the prosecution occurred in 1995.